

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 31, 2005

For More Information Contact

Joseph J. Hilbert (804) 864-7006

STATE BOARD OF HEALTH ADOPTS CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL AS ITS TOP PRIORITY

(Richmond, Va.)—The Virginia Board of Health has announced that the prevention and control of chronic disease, such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes, will be its top priority. The Board has formally issued a set of public policy goals and objectives to help combat chronic disease in Virginia.

“Given the severe consequences for Virginia’s economy and the quality of life of its residents, the Commonwealth can not afford to ignore the threat posed by chronic disease,” said State Board of Health Chairman Jack O. Lanier, Dr. P.H. “The Board supports the implementation and promotion of best practices in the prevention and management of chronic disease.”

The State Board of Health, which provides leadership in public health planning and policy development, consists of 13 members appointed by the Governor. Individual board members represent professions including medicine, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy and veterinary medicine, and also represent constituencies such as local government, hospitals, nursing homes, managed care health insurance plans, consumers and corporate purchasers of health care.

“The Board is uniquely positioned within the State to convene stakeholders, develop public policy proposals to address chronic disease prevention, and advocate for their adoption,” Dr. Lanier explained.

The Board notes that people with chronic illness comprise health care’s largest, most expensive and fastest growing group. For example, data from the Virginia Medicaid Program show that annual per recipient expenses for adults diagnosed with various chronic diseases are, on average depending upon the specific condition, \$2,300 to \$23,000 higher than for Medicaid recipients as a whole. The direct medical expenses posed by chronic disease are immense, but the economic costs attributable to lost productivity are much higher. Two types of chronic disease, heart disease and cancer, are the nation’s leading official causes of death. The Board identifies preventable risk factors such as tobacco use, poor diet and physical inactivity, as the nation’s leading actual causes of death.

“The Board supports public policies and practices aimed at promoting healthy behavioral
(more)

choices, especially among young people, so that they may carry those healthy habits with them into adulthood,” explained Board of Health Vice-Chairman Dick Grinnan, M.D. “The Board’s initiative is supportive of, and a natural extension to, Governor Warner’s Healthy Virginians Initiative,” Dr. Grinnan continued.

The Board has identified a number of specific public health policy objectives that the Board plans to actively pursue, including:

- Serve as the unifying voice for the prevention and control of chronic diseases in Virginia,
- Establish the burden associated with chronic diseases and frame the problem to be addressed,
- Develop strong working relationships with other governmental agencies and governing boards, and with non-governmental lay and professional groups,
- Foster the development of public/private partnerships that will facilitate improved prevention and control of chronic disease,
- Encourage the creation of financial and non-financial incentives and disincentives that will spur progress in chronic disease prevention and control efforts,
- Work with partners to develop comprehensive state plans to guide program efforts that emphasize quality of care, prevention measures and improved outcomes,
- Focus on specific targets for change (e.g., population segments, organizations or environments), choose the best channels to effect such changes, and select appropriate strategies for doing so,
- Establish systematic approaches for determining whether Virginia’s comprehensive chronic disease program’s objectives are being achieved, and
- Support the National Chronic Disease Prevention Agenda established by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For more information about the Board’s chronic disease prevention and control initiative, log on to the Virginia Department of Health’s Web site at www.vdh.virginia.gov/commish/BOH.asp

###